Moscow State University

Final project in the course “World of Britain”

**Education in Britain and in Russia:**

**advantages and disadvantages – a personal view**



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**Introduction**

 English education is, undoubtedly, one of the most prestigious today with a long history dating back hundreds of years and it is a role model for many educational systems all over the world. It provides children with extensive knowledge and valuable skills in high demand on the labour market and therefore with great prospects for the future. Russian system of education, stemming from the same root of the Greek and Latin pedagogical cultures, is much younger, but it can also boast a number of important achievements, especially in the Soviet epoch. It would be both curious and interesting to compare them and arrive at a conclusion as to which aspects of the British educational traditions can be beneficially applied in Russia. Also, such comparison might well prove valuable for achieving a better understanding of British and Russian cultures since when comparing two countries, two cultures, two models of historical development it is always very beneficial to take a closer look at their educational systems. Meant for ensuring the continuity of culture, education contains its highest fruit in a condensed form. Further I will give a brief overview of education in Britain and Russia in terms of current state of affairs and will finally complete the paper with an overall analysis.

**I. Education in Britain: Structure and Present Situation**

Presently, there are five stages of education in the United Kingdom, and each has its own peculiarities and history usually largely overlapping with those of other stages:

1. Pre-school (optional)
2. Primary Education (compulsory)
3. Secondary Education (compulsory)
4. Further Education (optional)
5. Higher Education (optional)

Every child in the UK regardless of their nationality, race and social status is entitled to free education, which is compulsory for all children from 5 (4 in Northern Ireland) to 16 years of age. Along with state schools which are funded by the UK government and free of charge, there are public schools, expensive fee-paying independent schools. Boarding schools are also very popular in Great Britain as they allow children to live and study there. So, parents are able to choose where to send their children to study.

For the purposes of consistency and logicality, each stage will be considered in turn and separately with a general overview at the end of the paper.

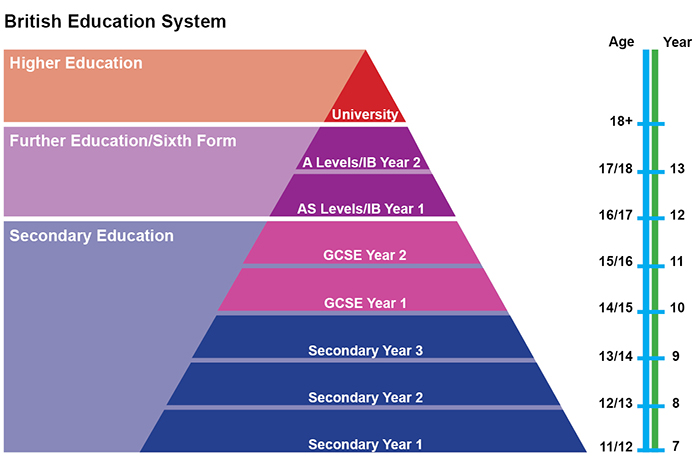
**Pre-school Education**

Traditionally, schools have always been meant for children who has already learnt basic writing and reading skills at home. However, beginning from the late XVIII century special institutions appeared for those who were unable to get them (orphans and children whose mothers worked full-time). The first full-scale pre-school in Britain and arguably even in the world was opened in 1816 in New Lanark, Scotland by the pedagogue and philosopher Robert Owen. He put a stress on cultivating basic morality (early socialization), literacy and numeracy, and it still remains the case throughout the country where children have a right to a free part-time place in a pre-school educational establishment.

**Primary Education**

After pre-school children enter a primary school, of which there are two general types: state-funded without charge (93% of pupils) and fee-paying private (7%). In the UK primary educations begins at age 5 and continues until age 11, being subdivided into Key Stage 1 (Infants, 5-7 years) and Key Stage 2 (Juniors, 7-11 years). Throughout the country at the end of each stage pupils receive assessment (except for Wales where children are assessed in their final year of primary school). The principal objectives primary education seeks to accomplish are to develop elementary literacy and mathematical skills together with basic knowledge of natural science and other disciplines.

**Secondary Education**

At this stage most pupils enter a comprehensive school, which are non-selective and admit children, mainly local, from the neighbourhood, regardless of their aptitude. Most of them (around 90 per cent) place emphasis on a certain subject or area of specialization. A minority of pupils go to selective grammar schools on the basis of their results in the eleven plus exam (which is optional) or to faith schools.

At the end of this stage of education, pupils usually take one of a number of external exams, mainly GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) and Standard Grades in Scotland.

**Further Education**

Whereas primary and secondary education is compulsory in the UK, after students finish it (at age 16), it becomes optional. They can either find a job, take a vocational course, or study for an academic qualification.

**Path One: Vocational Education**

For students who are not so academically minded, there is an option to extend their education studying a vocational programme that will give them more practical skills, experience and education, first of all in the sphere of manual labour. Among the popular vocational courses there are BTEC Awards, National Vocational Qualification (NVQ), City and Guilds Qualification and Apprenticeships.

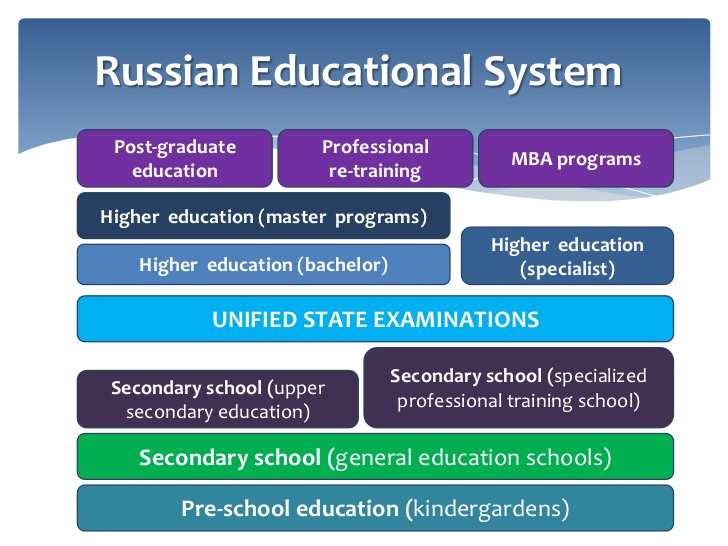
**Path Two: Preparation for Entrance to Higher Education**

For those who choose to carry on with their education and follow a more academic path in life most schools in the UK have a so-called "6th Form". Another option is many 6th Form colleges that offer the same programmes from students at schools that do not have a 6th form. Here students typically study A-levels — a 2-year course and a following exam meant for those who are going to enter higher education and gain a place to a university.

**Higher Education**

Higher education in the UK comprises Bachelor’s degrees (4 years), Master’s degrees (2 years) and doctoral programmes (PhD, 3-4 years). It is provided on a fee-paying basis with tuition fees up to £9,250 pounds per year from autumn 2017.

**II. Education in Russia: Structure and Present Situation**

Presently, five stages of education can be clearly defined in the Russian Federation:

1. *Pre-school Education* (optional)

2. *Incomplete General Education* (9 years, compulsory)

3. *Vocational Education* (optional)

4. *Complete General Education* (10-11 grades, optional)

5. *Higher Education* (optional)

Every child in Russia has the right to free education, which is compulsory for all children from 6-7 years to 14-15 (9th grade).

**Pre-school Education**

According to statistical data, some 85% or children of pre-school age are enrolled in a kindergarten or have been enrolled in a pre-school course. However, parents in large cities are often faced with a huge shortage of places in pre-school establishments in their neighbourhood and thousand-long waiting lists. The principal aims which are traditionally set for kindergartens not only in Russia, but all over the world are to achieve elementary literacy and numeracy along with necessary social skills mostly related to communication and cooperation with others. Most of the day children in Russian kindergartens are engaged in games, both educational and entertaining, and different social situations with their peers.

**Incomplete General (Secondary) Education**

According to the Government Resolution (23 March 2001, № 224), Incomplete General Education includes two mandatory stages: Elementary (1-4 grades) and Middle (5-9 grades). Children are admitted to the first grade at age 6 or 7, depending on individual development of each child, and are usually guided through elementary school by a single teacher in most subjects. Each school year lasts from September 1 to the end of May and is split into four terms with holiday breaks between them. Study curriculum is fixed, so, contrary to certain countries in the West, neither pupils nor their parents have no say in choosing the range of study subjects. School education in Russia is free for everyone. However, some people can afford to pay for private schools which are rather costly. Pupils spend more time there in comparison with traditional schools as there are some additional subjects for them to study. At the end of the 9-year students take Primary State Exam (ОГЭ), which provides assessment of their knowledge at this key milestone.

**Vocational Education**

Once a student has completed the nine-year school programme, in most federal subjects of Russia with parental consent he or she is entitled to leave school and get a job or continue education in a specialized vocational training school, of which there are three main types: PTUs, technicums (more prestigious and high-quality in terms of education compared to PTUs) and nurse schools. Students are accepted to these establishments on the basis of their results in Primary State Exam (ОГЭ).

**Complete General (Secondary) Education**

Those who are eager to continue their education at a higher educational establishment have to complete the 11-year course and obliged to pass USE (Unified State Exam) in mathematics and Russian language. USE in other subjects is voluntary. As a rule, pupils choose to take the subjects which are needed to enter a particular university. If a person successfully passes these exams, they receive a school leaving certificate.

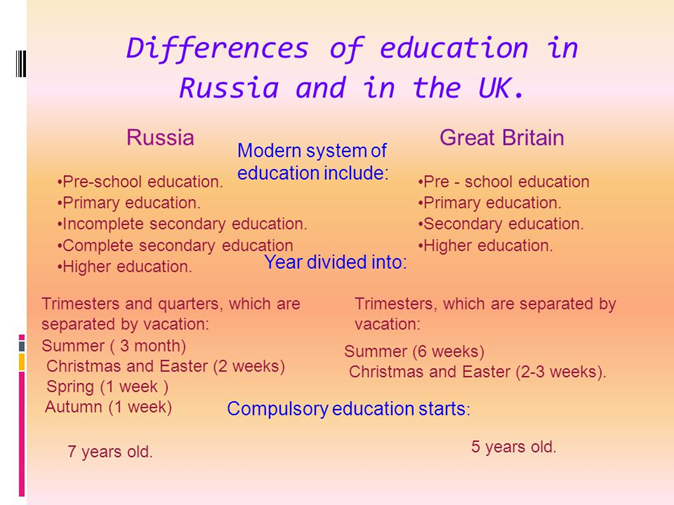
**Higher Education**

On the basis of their results in USE, students are either admitted or turned down for a place at a university of their choice. First tertiary education in Russia is free, but only for people with good academic performance, so very often students apply for a budget place, but are accepted only with full pay as the number of budget places is very limited and the competition may be high.

A university course in Russia takes from 4 to 6 years to complete: 4 years for a Bachelor’s degree, 5 years for a specialist’s degree, 2 years for a Master’s degree with certain differences for part-time and medical students. There are 4 forms of higher education in Russia: full-time, part-time, evening courses and externship. After graduation most young people find jobs, which are often not related to their specializations. Another option they have is to go for a doctoral program (3-4 years) and obtain a degree called “Candidate of Science”, which is quite similar to the European PhD and allows to teach at university and do scientific research at respective institutions.

**III. The peculiarities of British and Russian education:**

**a comparative analysis and critical overview**

The first thing to be mentioned in the comparative analysis of education in Russia and the UK is that they both stem from the single root of Greek-Latin pedagogical culture absorbed by the countries at different stages of their historical development. The differences in the course of the latter predetermined the current differences in structure and content of the Russian and the British educational systems. However, the similarities are vast, profound and far more important compared to what distinguishes them. And it is also to be noted that there is a general tendency towards convergence between them since the collapse of the Soviet Union and especially since Russia began to enforce the Bologna Process model. Further I will focus on a number of points which differ in the considered countries most beyond the evident peculiarities as presented in the table above.

**Pre-school System**

British pre-school establishments function quite efficiently and do not provoke serious criticism, which cannot be said about Russian kindergartens facing grave difficulties in large cities. Not only are they underequipped, they are also too few to meet the existing and ever-growing demand: in Moscow waiting lists for kindergarten places are sometimes as long as 15,000 children.

**The tradition of Boarding Schools in Britain and Russia**

It is common knowledge that boarding schools in England can boast a very long and glorious in terms of history and academic results. This model presupposes that students live there on full board almost without leaving the place during the whole academic year which allows to concentrate fully on learning. A lot of famous and prominent people, scientists, poets, writers, state leaders have had a boarding school background. Unfortunately, the boarding school model is almost non-existent in Russia.

**Higher Education Rigorous Traditions in Britain**

The discipline in British schools and universities is far more rigorous and far less permissive. It is nearly impossible to download a paper from the Internet and then hand it in without being caught. Plagiarism is easily and almost always identified so students have to write their papers on their own, formulate ideas, make independent conclusions. It is also impossible to resit an exam three times, students are given such a chance only once in Britain and even that — not always. It is also much harder and more demanding to be admitted to prestigious universities and win the tough competition for places there, it requires more effort, energy and often money.

**Bribery and Additional Charges**

Russian educational establishments, especially those of higher education are often criticized for the relatively wide-spread practice of taking bribes from students and other forms of corruption within the educational system. On the other hand, schools are plagued by “optional-compulsory” (an impossible term for a Western worldview) additional charges (for example for cleaning classrooms and renovating the school building, presents for teachers, etc.) which have been causing recently fierce public protests from pupils and parents. British educational system, on the contrary, has known neither of the problems on any noticeable scale.

**Tuition Fees**

In Russia each person is entitled to free higher education and can get it if he or she meets the academic performance requirements. In the UK, on the contrary, it is always a very costly pleasure at the price of more than £9,250 per year, which is definitely a disadvantage. Students there as well as in the US often have to take out bank loans and then pay them back for many years after graduation. In Russia even if a student enters university on a fee-paying basis, the tuition fee is not that high.

**Technical Education**

It is widely believed that Russia since the Soviet Union has had strong traditions of technical and mathematical education, which not only can be compared to that of Britain but arguably surpasses it. However, Russian educational establishments are, to put it mildly, underequipped for both research and study.

**Conclusion**

To conclude, it is accepted worldwide that British education is among the best and cannot be compared to Russia by most criteria. Nevertheless, our country is developing fast and has secured a number of promising achievements in this sphere, which allows to hope for the better. Speaking of major advantages for students in Russia, I believe there are three of them compared to Britain: 1) high quality and accessibility of technical and mathematical education; 2) right to free higher education and lower tuition fees; 3) weaker discipline and a friendlier and more permissive environment which is both an advantage and disadvantage, depending on our point of view.

Another fact not to be overlooked for a proper judgement is that while Russia’s expenditures on education are growing (3.8% GDP as of 2013), they are still behind those of developed countries (5-7% GDP) and it influences the quality of education in terms of facilities, equipment, qualification and process.

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